

# 14 Vital Skills for Supervisors

Acting to Prevent Violence



# 14



## **Acting to Prevent Violence**

Awareness of the red flags that can signal violent behavior can save lives. Know the conditions that breed violence and protect your workplace from toxic conflicts.

# Preventing Workplace Violence

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- Violence we hear about is often faraway places.
- At work, it's an entirely different type of tragedy
- We are more affected when it happens at work because of sense of control is involved.
- It's impossible to prevent all workplace violence.
- We can takes steps to lower its odds of occurrence.





# Preventing Workplace Violence

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- Adopt a three-prong strategy:
  - Analyze the threat
  - Enhance security to mitigate hazards
  - Know how to respond to a potentially violent situation 📢



# Identifying High-Risk Employees

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- Violent employees tend to share a cluster of characteristics that include:
  - An intense interest in weapons
  - A history of family violence – or personal acts of violence 📢
  - Personality disorders, low self-worth and/or depression
  - An inability to manage anger and fear in acceptable ways



# Identifying High-Risk Employees (continued)

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- A history of substance abuse
- Exposure to peers (often outside of work) who promote violence
- A lack of a healthy support system such as a loving family and friends
- If an employee exhibited most or all of these traits, it's prudent to conclude the person may pose a threat



# Recognize the Warning Signs

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- Uncharacteristically tardy or absent
- Drop in productivity or a sudden pattern of inconsistent performance
- Starts picking fights with coworkers or engages in other disruptive behavior
- Violates rules relating to workplace safety or treatment of colleagues (may need help from the EAP)

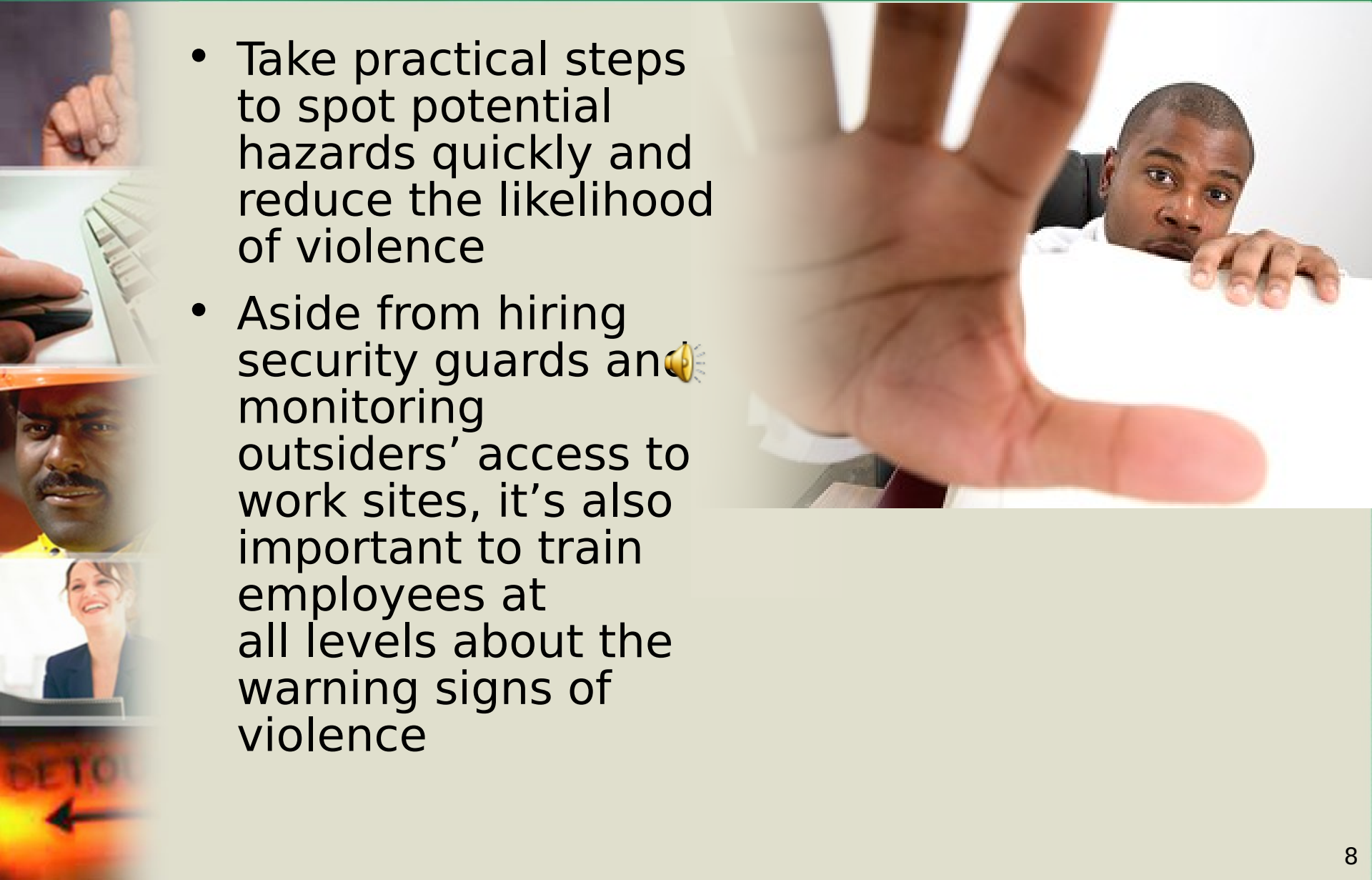




# Boost Security

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- Take practical steps to spot potential hazards quickly and reduce the likelihood of violence
- Aside from hiring security guards and monitoring outsiders' access to work sites, it's also important to train employees at all levels about the warning signs of violence





# Other Steps to Increase Security

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- Arrange for adequate staffing on all shifts
- Install protective barriers
- Maintain clutter-free escape routes
- Provide employees with security equipment and training



# Other Steps (continued)

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- Respond to even minor outbreaks of violence with consistent and thorough follow-up that includes completing an investigation and taking appropriate action
- Train employees in conflict resolution and non-violent responses to conflict on the job



# Managing Potentially Violent Scenarios

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- Choose your words carefully
- In a calm, unhurried tone, say what you see
- Avoid issuing judgments or giving advice
- After you share your observations, stop and listen
- Let the employee blow off steam
- Signal for immediate help



# Managing Physical Confrontations

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- Make eye contact with the individual
- It's natural to look away or close your eyes if you're agitated or fearful of being struck, but your eyes can help you establish your authority and control the situation more effectively





# Be Prepared

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- Beware of freezing up when facing a threat
- Plan now for what you'll do—call the police on your cell phone, evacuate bystanders, lead the threatening person toward your security guard's station 📢
- Never turn away from a violent individual unless you intend to flee



# Warning

## Skill 14

- If you're scared or unsure what to do, keep it to yourself
- Maintain a confident, supportive demeanor, even if you're panicking inside 🔊
- Projecting calm authority can help you contain an individual's volatility




- Because violence can erupt after a termination, set employees' expectations properly if they're in danger of being fired
- Document unacceptable performance or behavior and explain the consequences if it continues
- Avoid surprise terminations



# It's True

## Skill 14

- 20 workers are murdered and 18,000 are assaulted on the job each week
- Over a million people are victims of workplace violence each year 
- Homicide is the second leading cause of death in the American workplace after vehicle accidents



Source: National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health